

Unfortunately, the President's only fundamental concern is how do we kick this past the next election. Above all else, not good policy, not what is best for our citizens, but the No. 1 goal is how to get past the next election. This is, unfortunately, his bottom line. Simply astounding that the campaign of hope and change has become such business as usual. Simply raising the debt ceiling absent any meaningful spending reforms will not work.

Now we find ourselves in one heck of a mess. With about a week to go, the latest in the debt limit saga is a proposal that was introduced last night by Senator REID. But here is why this latest plan has so many problems. Policywise, it does not hold together. The plan claims \$1 trillion in savings from reductions in troop forces. These savings assume the troop surge extends into perpetuity, which never was the plan. So it assumes savings from stopping spending that was never scheduled or even requested. It is like reaching into the air and grabbing savings. Essentially, this plan counts savings that were scheduled to happen.

Second, the plan counts \$400 billion in interest savings on that savings relative to the troop money that was not going to be spent, was not asked for. In other words, not only does the plan count nonexistent savings, it then compounds the policy problem by counting nonexistent interest savings on that savings. You simply cannot count savings that were never intended to happen.

We are dealing with a ticking timebomb here. We have rating agencies saying: My goodness, your debt is so out of control that unless we see a plan, we will not be fooled by the gimmicks. Yet this policy approach does not hold together. You see, the rating agencies, justifiably so, want to see real budget savings that actually help to improve our balance sheet.

We are at a critical time in our Nation's history. With 1 week left, the American people are yearning for bold leadership, not another shell game. Heated rhetoric and charged accusations are not going to fix the fiscal situation.

I stand ready to work with my colleagues on a solution, and I urge the President to do the same. Let's quit defending what is indefensible; that is, worrying about getting the can kicked down the road past the next election, and let's try to figure out how best to address this.

There was a plan that came out recently. It was a plan dubbed from the Gang of 6, and the Presiding Officer and I have had some interest in that plan. But we all acknowledge it is going to take time to put that plan in place, to debate that plan, to bring it to the floor, to do the things that are necessary. We have to take action now. I am a part of a group that says: Look, let's take a long hard look at that plan. Let's see if that is the plan we can move down the field to success.

But we have just 7 days left. We need to face the reality that 7 days from now we will be within hours of hitting our debt ceiling. Incidentally, to those who are arguing: No, it is not August 2, well, if it is not August 2, it is close to August 2. We are facing a real problem where there will not be enough money to pay the bills.

Many say: Pay the interest on the debt. Make sure you get that done. I am not opposed to that. I do not want to default on our debt. But that means we have about 50 cents on the dollar in August, according to a cashflow statement done by the Bipartisan Policy Group, and that means that 50 percent of those out there who would otherwise receive some type of payment from the Federal Government will not get it because there simply is not enough money to pay the bills.

So what does Speaker BOEHNER's plan do?

Well, it is a plan that is realistic. It says, look, we have to come to grips with where we are in the next 7 days or we can simply suspend rational thought, believe that the record-breaking debt increases to accommodate record-setting debt are somehow a plausible course. It is not.

I am more apt to believe the President's own words. When the debt limit increase was \$781 billion to raise our borrowing authority to \$9 trillion, then Senator Obama was in the place where we are in today, deciding on whether he would vote for a debt ceiling increase, and he called the situation then a "failure of leadership." He went on to say "increasing America's debt weakens us domestically and internationally."

Well, we were at \$9 trillion then, an unforgivable amount of money. Today we are at \$14.5 trillion, and the steam engine is firing away, building up more and more debt.

Senator Obama's words were as truthful then as they are today. Yet now he has done a 180. His Presidency has hit the turbo booster when it comes to record debt.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time reserved for the Republicans has expired.

Mr. JOHANNES. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

RAISING THE DEBT CEILING

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, we are now 1 week away from the unthinkable prospect of the United States of America defaulting on its loans for the first time in our history and not making good on promises we have made to families, veterans, senior citizens across the country.

I am deeply disappointed we have gotten to this point. If we cannot come to an agreement by August 2, the consequences for our Nation and our economic recovery will be dire. A few weeks ago, the Bipartisan Policy Cen-

ter put out a report that was actually authored by a former Bush Treasury official about what would happen if Congress failed to act and if the administration was forced to make desperate spending decisions in August. The scenarios were very grim.

Potentially at risk were the benefits and health care we owe our veterans, loans for struggling small businesses, food stamps for people who are struggling to buy groceries, Social Security checks for our seniors, unemployment benefits for millions of workers who are desperately looking for jobs today, and even Active-Duty pay for our military.

If the debt ceiling is not raised, we also face the very real and frightening possibility of our economy falling back into another deep recession, interest rates going up for our families and consumers, millions of workers losing their jobs, and small businesses being forced to close their doors. These risks are unacceptable. People are still recovering in this tough economy and they cannot afford to have the rug pulled out from under them.

Many families from my home State of Washington have reached out to my office throughout this debate, trying to figure out what they would do if the support they depend upon to stay in their homes, to put food on their tables is suddenly cut off. They have a pretty simple message: Get it done, compromise, and put American families first.

One letter came from Anne Phillips from Tacoma, WA, who after 18 years of work was laid off during the recession. Anne told me about how she felt she was doing the responsible thing by getting herself up, dusting herself off, going back to college. But now she is worried sick because of the fact that the interest rate she pays on her student loans, which she relies on to pay for school, would shoot up if we default.

In her letter, Anne made clear who the real victims of default would be. She said: "Ultimately people like me, my husband, my family, and all the people I know who are doing their best every day to make the contribution to society will pay the expense."

Anne is not alone in her concern. I have heard from veterans such as Kenneth Huff, a retired master sergeant from Olympia, WA. He spent 28 years serving our country. He told me how through a life in the military he learned the value of compromise and how he is tired of the way the peoples' work is not being done.

He wrote:

I agree. We can cut back on spending. I know we can do a better job. But not on the backs of the very poor, the middle class, veterans and our seniors who are on Social Security and Medicare.

I have also heard from Social Security recipients such as Alisa Terry from Bellingham, WA, who told me how important that monthly check is to her and what it would mean if she did not get it next month. She says:

Social Security is my lifeline. It stands between me and homelessness.

These families and seniors deserve to have the certainty of a Federal Government that stands ready to pay its debt. They do not deserve to turn on the news every day and read about the political games House Republicans are playing with their lives and economic future. Democrats have been at the table. We have been ready and willing to compromise for months and months. We know we need to get this done. We have offered compromise after compromise. We have come to the middle and beyond. We have offered serious and deep cuts in Federal spending—very hard for some of us to do.

We have put it on the table and then we offered even more. But again and again, the House Republicans have said no. They refuse to compromise, and they refuse to come to the middle. Time and time again, they seem to be more interested in satisfying the most extreme elements of their base than on finding real solutions for the people of this country.

The House Republicans even sent us a bill they called cut, cap and balance that was not only widely understood to be a political gimmick but it had no chance of becoming law, and not only would it have been absolutely devastating for families and seniors across this country but it managed to waste precious time in Congress at a point when that resource is getting scarcer and scarcer.

So we are down to the wire. Political games need to end. They need to stop finding ways to say no and start figuring out what they can say yes to. The bill we introduced last night is a compromise. I do not believe it is perfect, but it gets us where we need to get to protect families and small businesses across America from market uncertainty, not just for a month or two. That is not what American families need. They need to know they have that economic certainty and that we will not be back in this ball game in just a few short months, going through the same process, with people worried about their Social Security checks and veterans worried again and with the markets uncertain.

The legislation that was introduced last night does make deep and serious cuts in government spending, savings that have either been discussed and agreed on in previous negotiations with Republicans or that Republicans have actually used in the budgets they recently passed themselves.

It does protect Medicare and Social Security that was promised to our seniors. It does not increase revenue, something many of us have argued time and time again needs to be a part of a balanced approach to a conclusion. But we understand compromise is important. So it does not increase revenue and that appears to be something my Republican colleagues have almost single-mindedly focused on in this process. So we have given in on that.

It puts our country on a more sustainable fiscal track, and it allows us to continue the important work to reduce the debt and deficit without the threat of economic calamity hanging over our heads such as the current House proposal does.

On this side, Democrats have bent over backward to get this done. We compromised. We compromised again and then again. The bill that was introduced last night on our side is the fruit of many compromises. We did this not because we think this is the ideal way to tackle this issue—Democrats do want a larger and a more balanced package that we believe will address our problems in a responsible way for years to come—but we put this forward because we know the American people want results, not rhetoric, and we know the consequences of inaction are far too high.

I call on our Republican colleagues to support this legislation, stop playing politics with the American economy, and work with us to solve this problem for the American people.

I yield the floor and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NOMINATION OF PAUL A. ENGELMAYER TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK

NOMINATION OF RAMONA VILLAGOMEZ MANGLONA TO BE JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session to consider the following nominations, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read the nominations of Paul A. Engelmayer, of New York, to be United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York, and Ramona Villagomez Manglona, of the Northern Mariana Islands, to be Judge for the District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. There will be 2 minutes of debate equally divided.

The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I don't intend to use but 1 minute because I spoke yesterday on this nomination, but I would urge my colleagues to support the nomination of Paul A. Engelmayer to be district judge. He is very well qualified, and I would encourage a "yes" vote.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, yesterday I made a statement about the need for the Senate to consider all 27 judicial nominees reviewed by the Senate Judiciary Committee and now awaiting final action by the Senate. I was disappointed that the votes on Paul Engelmayer to fill a judicial emergency vacancy on the Southern District of New York and Ramona Manglona to fill a 10-year term on the District Court for the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, which had already been stalled for 3½ months, were not considered yesterday. These are the kinds of qualified, consensus judicial nominations that in past years would have been confirmed promptly. I hope and trust that at least they will be considered and confirmed today.

After their confirmations, there will be 25 judicial nominations fully considered by the Judiciary Committee awaiting final action by the Senate. Twenty of them were unanimously reported, without a single negative vote. Regrettably, the Senate has not reduced vacancies as dramatically as we did during the Bush administration. Federal judicial vacancies around the country still number too many, and they have persisted for far too long.

By the August recess in the third year of the Bush administration, the Senate had confirmed 143 Federal circuit and district court judges. As we approach the August recess in the third year of the Obama administration, the comparable number after confirmation of Paul Engelmayer and Ramona Manglona today will be only 91.

We have a long way to go to do as well as we did during President Bush's first term, when we confirmed 205 of his judicial nominations. The Senate confirmed 100 of those judicial nominations during the 17 months I was chairman during President Bush's first 2 years in office. So far, as we near the end of President Obama's 30th month in office, the Senate has only been allowed to consider and confirm only 91 of President Obama's Federal circuit and district court nominees. Despite the needs of the Federal judiciary, the delays in confirmation of President Obama's consensus judicial nominees continue to the detriment of the American people.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I yield our time on this side.